

REVIEW OF *TECHNOLOGY IN INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS RESEARCH AND TEACHING*

Technology in Interlanguage Pragmatics Research and Teaching

Edited by Naoko Taguchi & Julie M. Sykes

2013

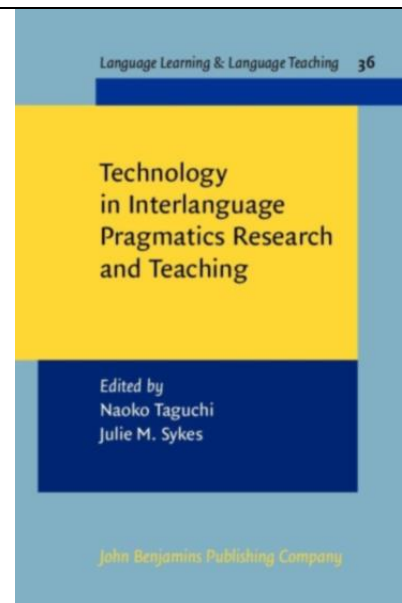
ISBN: 978-90-272-13136

US \$143.00 (hardcover), \$54.00 (paperback)

276 pp.

John Benjamins (North America)

Philadelphia, PA



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This book is a collective endeavor of exploring the role of technology in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) research, instruction, and assessment. It starts with an introduction (Chapter 1) and ends with a commentary and a prologue, both of which envision future directions of using technology in the field of ILP. The included studies are divided into two parts: Part I (Chapters 2 to 6) which addresses issues in ILP research, and Part II (Chapters 7 to 10) which addresses issues in ILP instruction and assessment.

In Chapter 1, Naoko Taguchi and Julie Sykes (both editors) first give a brief review of the field of ILP and then highlight four major ways that technology has advanced ILP studies: (a) expanding the construct of pragmatic competence (the processing speed); (b) digitizing learners' online performance for analysis (e.g., speed rates, pauses); (c) creating digital spaces where pragmatic functions are frequently performed; and (d) quantifying and visualizing textual data (e.g., learners' writing corpora) through concordancing programs and grammatical tagging. In addition, the authors provide brief summaries of studies included in this book.

In Chapter 2, Naoko Taguchi synthesizes the findings of her previous studies on comprehending implicatures in second language (L2) English. Using a computerized pragmatic listening task, she measures L2 learners' pragmatic comprehension at two different levels: accurate understanding of implied intentions and the speed of processing pragmatic information (measured by response time). Findings showed that when conventionality increased, learners increased their comprehension speed and even gained more of it over time compared with their comprehension accuracy. Taguchi attributes to conventional implicatures relying on fixed linguistic forms to deliver implied intentions. Other findings showed that learners in the target language country (taking ESL classes) had gained more in comprehension speed than in accuracy, while their counterparts in the domestic instructional context (EFL), on the other hand, experienced the opposite and gained more accuracy.

In the following chapter, Shuai Li investigates the effects of different types of practice on American learners' levels of accuracy and speed in their recognition and production of requests in L2 Chinese. During four consecutive days, the two experimental groups (the input-based and output-based groups)

received input-based and output-based practices separately after receiving the same metapragmatic instruction on target request forms, while the control group received instruction and practice in L2 Chinese reading comprehension. The data of the computerized pragmatic recognition and production tasks showed that the two experimental groups outperformed the control group at both levels of accuracy and speed in their pragmatic recognition and production. The magnitude of gain at the level of speed, however, was smaller than at the level of accuracy, regardless of the types of practice.

In Chapter 4, Julie Sykes investigates how multiuser virtual environments (MUVES) affect the production of apologies in L2 Spanish. Learners were engaged in *Croquelandia*, the first MUVE developed for learning requests and apologies in L2 Spanish. In *Croquelandia*, learners interacted with non-player characters (NPCs) by choosing appropriate utterances according to situations. The data of pre- and post-discourse completion tasks (DCTs) showed a moderate shift from using speaker-oriented to hearer-oriented apology strategies. In addition, pre- and post-surveys and interviews showed a self-perceived increase in using appropriate apology strategies. These findings suggest a positive role of MUVES in pragmatic instruction. In the next chapter, Adrienne Gonzales examines an L2 Spanish learner's use of conversation closings in a text-based synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC). The data consisted of learners' text-based conversations with native speakers in a digital space (i.e., *Livemocha*). Conversation analysis revealed a tendency to use closing sequences as rapport management strategies, suggesting that digital spaces such as *Livemocha* can mediate L2 pragmatic development. In addition, the interview data showed a positive orientation towards using digital spaces to learn pragmatics.

In the last chapter of Part I (Chapter 6), Alfredo Urzúa uses automated corpus-based techniques (e.g., concordancing programs and grammatical tagging) to investigate the use of subjective pronouns and possessives (self-positioning strategies) in L2 English writing. The corpus consisted of essays written by two groups of ESL learners who took sequential writing courses over two semesters. Longitudinal analysis of the corpus showed that as time passed, learners tended to avoid using *you* and *I*, but favored *we* in terms of normed frequency. In addition, the essays from four randomly selected learners in each group were analyzed separately, showing differences in choosing self-positioning devices between the two groups. The study showed the advantage of using corpus-based techniques to seek patterns of using different linguistic devices in order to convey pragmatic information.

In Part II, four pedagogically-oriented studies focused on technology-based feedback (Chapter 7), assessment (Chapter 8), learning (Chapter 9) and analysis (Chapter 10) of pragmatic features. In Chapter 7, Christopher Holden and Julie Sykes investigate four types of feedback on L2 pragmatics via *Mentira*, a place-based mobile game of learning Spanish. In *Mentira*, learners interacted with NPCs by choosing appropriate utterances to seek information in order to profess their innocence over a murder in a local Spanish community. As a part of a curriculum of a college-level Spanish class, *Mentira* required learners to visit the real local community where the game was situated in order to find clues for game playing. The authors found that in the three iterations of *Mentira*, learners received implicit feedback on L2 pragmatics via interactions with NPCs, and what they learned in the game was enhanced through environmental feedback (communicating with people in the real local community). Peer and instructor feedback, however, was lacking in terms of pragmatic information. In Chapter 8, Yumi Takamiya and Noriko Ishihara examine the role of blogging in improving pragmatic awareness and production. The study documented how blogging mediated learning of refusals in L2 Japanese from a sociocultural perspective. Three learners wrote blogs reflecting on taught speech acts. In addition, they were asked to add a short open-ended questionnaire consisting of DCTs to collect speech act data from their native speaker partners. The data also included their background surveys and audio-recordings of all classes, individual meetings and course evaluations. One case was extensively discussed to show that asynchronous interaction via posting and responding to blog entries can gradually increase L2 learners' pragmatic awareness and in turn, facilitate their pragmatic production (e.g., refusals in this study).

In Chapter 9, Carsten Roever discusses issues on practicality and reliability of a computer-based test of

L2 pragmatics in English. Roever's test includes three sections: a multiple-choice section of comprehending implicatures, (N=12) a multiple-choice section of situation-bound routines, (N=12) and a brief DCT section for requests, apologies, and refusals. The data of 335 test takers were subject to statistical analysis. Findings revealed that degrees of computer familiarity did not have a significant effect on scores, and the overall use of vocabulary aids decreased with increasing proficiency. Moreover, the computer-based test showed strengths in practicality and improving reliability because of the instant digitization of score information.

In the last Chapter, Helen Zhao and David Kaufer introduce the potential of DocuScope to facilitate L2 pragmatic analysis. DocuScope is text-visualization and genre analysis software. The prescribed codes used by this software can analyze texts according to the appropriateness of pragmatic functional clusters of each genre. The study used DocuScope to analyze Chinese EFL learners' written text in three genres: descriptive, narrative, and informative. Their writing was analyzed by the software based on pragmatic functions specified by each of the three genres. Findings showed that, overall, learners were able to write different types of essays even with no training in English genres. These findings showed the possibility of using this type of technology to examine pragmatic functions at the discourse level.

Following Chapter 10, a commentary by Andrew Cohen presents detailed comments on each study. In his closing words, he confirms the significance of studies included in this book and emphasizes the importance of implementing technology in general L2 instruction. In the prologue, the two editors share their thoughts on the possible role of technology in future ILP research and instruction. For ILP research, they talk about how more advanced technology can provide various digitized data of L2 learners' pragmatic performance such as texts generated from telecollaboration (e.g., asynchronous and synchronous CMC). Moreover, it can provide more behavioral information when learners are completing real-time tasks (e.g., eye-tracking and using backend database software). For ILP instruction, they discuss how online authorship, social networking, mobile learning, and digital game playing offer venues for teaching L2 pragmatics. The editors argue that technology is not just a tool that can help researchers collect and analyze data, but also a mediating artifact that can expand the area of inquiry in the field of ILP.

The volume has revealed the status quo of the interface between technology and ILP studies. The nine core studies use various technologies in their research design, data analysis and context of pragmatic learning; (e.g., digital spaces) for example, experimental lab software was used to measure response time in pragmatic tasks such as PsyScope, SuperLab Pro in Chapter 2 and Revolution in Chapter 3. Text-based tools with built-in linguistic codes were used to analyze pragmatic features in learners' writing corpora (Chapters 6 and 10). Web-development software was used to design web-based pragmatic tests (Chapter 9). These types of technology served as tools to expand the construct of pragmatic competence (Chapters 2 and 3), to analyze data (Chapters 6 and 10), and to change the interface of a standardized test (Chapter 9). They all showed strengths of technology-enhanced studies and practical reports; however, the specific knowledge of these types of technology use is required in its implementation, which limits the applications of these tools. Four other studies, on the other hand, explored the benefits of interactions supported by technology in pragmatic teaching and learning (Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8). With supporting technology, L2 learners can interact with NPCs to learn pragmatic features such as with *Croquelandia* in Chapter 4 and *Mentira* in Chapter 7. They can also develop their pragmatic competence through synchronous (e.g., *Livemocha* in Chapter 5) and asynchronous CMC (e.g., blogging in Chapter 8). The major function of CMC is to provide interactions that may involve pragmatic performance; however, the pragmatic functions performed in daily face-to-face communication may be different from those performed in text-based CMC. A tool that can provide face-to-face conversations, therefore, may be beneficial for L2 learners, specifically in a domestic instructional context. The current Web 2.0 tools such as videoconferencing software (e.g. Skype) can be used to conduct face-to-face communications. But no such studies were included in this volume, showing paucity in existing literature on pragmatic

performance in oral computer-mediated interactions (Heins, et al., 2007; Yanguas, 2010). These studies can shed light on how L2 learners' pragmatic competence and development can be mediated by oral computer-mediated interactions. Another future direction that the volume can take is discussing target pragmatic features that are beyond utterances. Technology can allow researchers to analyze discourse patterns (Chapter 10); therefore, researchers should take advantage of these tools to analyze pragmatic functions at the monologic and dialogic levels (Rover, 2011).

In summary, the volume is a good collection of research studies that critically discuss the implementation of technology in the field of ILP. The book is a timely addition to the growing body of work on the interface between technology and L2 pragmatics. To the best of my knowledge, this publication is the first book dedicated to this topic and is therefore not only beneficial for researchers interested in this topic, but also for practitioners who would like to incorporate technology into the teaching of L2 pragmatics.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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